The Bulletins are published weekly throughout the school year (thirty issues) to aid teachers and students in keeping abreast of geography behind current news events.

GEOGRAPHIC SCHOOL BULLETINS

of

The National Geographic Society

WASHINGTON 6, D. C.

The National Geographic Society is a non-profit educational and scientific Society established for the increase of geographic knowledge and its popular diffusion.

VOLUME XXVI — May 17, 1948 — NUMBER 30

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EWING GALLOWAY

HANGING IN MID-AIR ON A SPINDLY LIANA VINE, A DARING YOUNG MAN OF BORNEO (Bulletin No. 1) GATHERS EDIBLE BIRDS' NESTS TO FLAVOR CHINESE SOUP

Bulletin No. 1, May 17, 1948

Oil-Rich Borneo Has Elusive Forest Wealth

OIL is the lifeblood of wild Borneo, projected self-governing unit in the United States of Indonesia now being formed. Timber and forest products, however, promise commerce to compete with oil if roads can be built through marshlands and jungles.

Prime timber covers close to four-fifths of the island of Borneo, third-largest in the world. It includes ironwood, sandalwood, teak, ebony, and other prized building and cabinet woods, and large stands of pine suitable for plywood. The forests also yield rattan, resin, tannin, nuts, floral oils, and that rarity, edible birds' nests (illustration, cover).

But coastal marshlands reaching inland up to 100 miles and tanglefoot undergrowth on the forested interior erase ordinary roads a few months after building. Only in the region of the principal towns—Pontianak, Balikpapan, Samarinda, and Bandjermasin—are there durable, hard-surface highways. Elsewhere, the rivers are the thoroughfares.

Dyaks, aborigines who practiced head-hunting until well after the turn of the present century, roam the swamps and highlands of eastern Borneo. Blowpipes with poison darts, bows and arrows, and short swords compose their arsenals. Wild pigs and fowl, monkeys and deer are their meat. Among larger animals are the rhinoceros and giant wild cattle.

Rare are the inland villages that can count 1,000 dwellers. Tattooing is so fashionable that many natives appear to be fully clothed in their tattoo designs. The sea yields a living for the more numerous coast population, which includes Malays (illustration, inside cover), many Buginese from Celebes Island to the east, and Javanese from crowded Java to the south.

Because of the inland highway afforded by the navigable Barito and Martapoera rivers, Bandjermasin, 15 miles upstream from the Java Sea on Borneo's southeast coast, grew up as a port for forest and mineral products. Prewar capital of Netherlands Borneo, it became a city of 65,000, largely built on piles or on rafts.

Oil alone built Balikpapan, a well-planned, one-industry community of 30,000 people midway on Borneo's Strait of Makassar coast. Pipelines carry oil from several fields around Samarinda, 60 miles to the north.

Tankers bring crude oil from Tarakan, an oil-drenched island on the coast near the British North Borneo border. Tarakan's raw petroleum is of such high grade that it can be used for lubrication and Diesel power without refining, merely by filtering out the sand.

In January, 1942, the Dutch burned their big oil installations to make them useless to Japan. The Japanese succeeded in repairing them sufficiently to make Balikpapan oil a vital help in their war effort.

NOTE: Borneo is shown on the National Geographic Society's map of Southeast Asia and Pacific Islands. Write the Society's headquarters, Washington 6, D. C., for map list.

For further information, see "Keeping House in Borneo," in the *National Geographic Magazine* for September, 1945.

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SHERWOOD L. WASHBURN

FOR THE WEDDING OF A BORNEO COUPLE, FRINGED BANNERS SUPPLEMENT THE WAVING JUNGLE TREES FOR DECORATION

Junior members of the bride's family have grandstand seats for the arrival of the bridegroom's party. Old customs linger among the Malays of Borneo, especially those who live along jungle rivers. So important is water transportation that a bridegroom, even though he may be the bride's next-door neighbor, makes a cruise of his trip to her home for the wedding. With a boatload of friends, he voyages to the event, executing traditional maneuvers on the river before landing for the ceremony.

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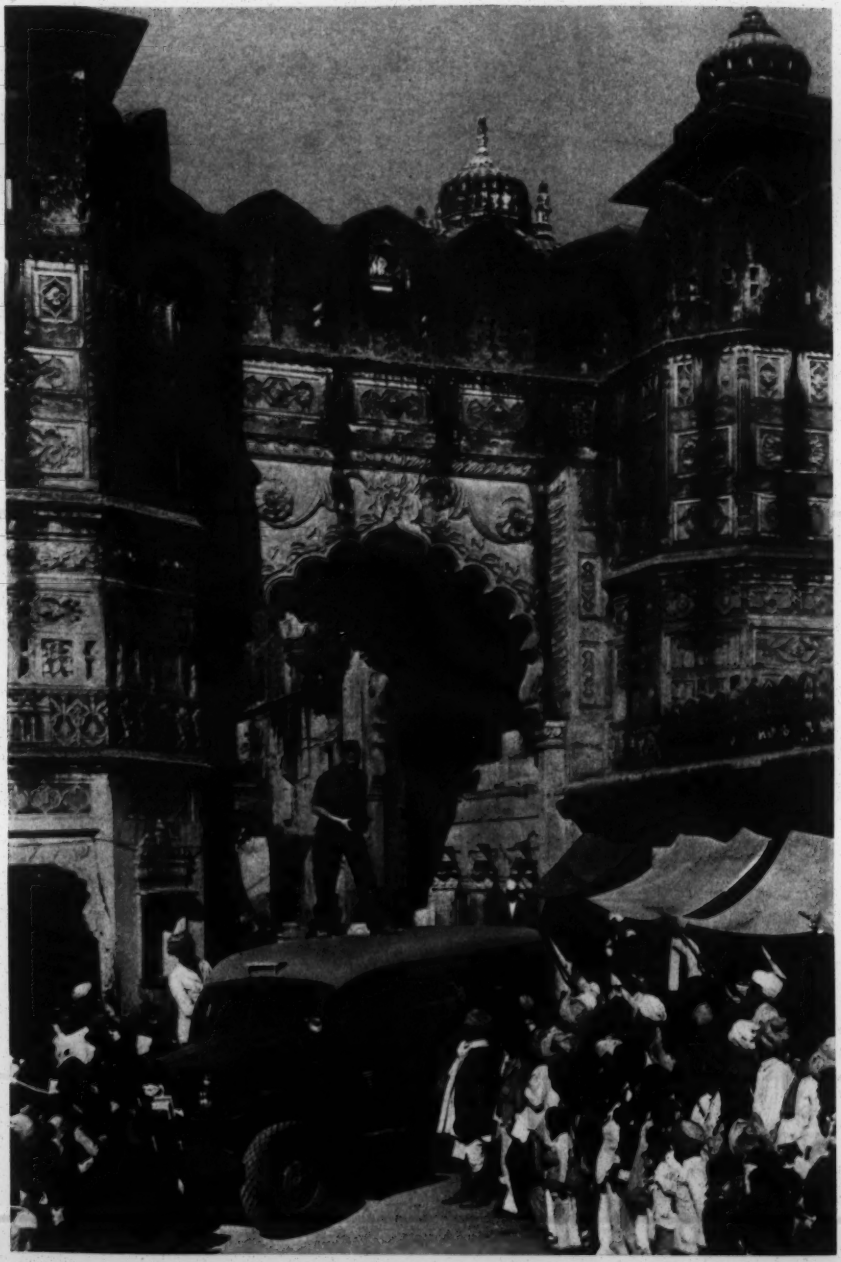

AT THE GATES OF BUNDI, INDIA, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC STAFFMAN VOLKMAR WENTZEL PHOTOGRAPHS CURIOUS NATIVES

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